

Bragging Son

Client's Question:

“My nine yr old son believes he is the best at everything he tries. Even if he has only attempted the sport or activity one time, he truly thinks he is great at it. He recently tried out for a hockey team and was honestly the worst skater on the ice (of course I didn't tell him that). I thought after skating with the other kids he would “get it” that he is a beginner and has a lot to learn. When he was done with the tryouts, he assumed he made the top-level team, and was saying he scored two goals. He didn't even touch the hockey puck! I try to tell him being the best isn't what is important, it is that he gives his best effort and contributes to the team. It is sad because he tells everyone how great his is at EVERYTHING and he really believes what he is saying. I get embarrassed for him. How can I get him to be humble and teach him a lesson in humility? I have tried talking to him and simply telling him he isn't the best without being cruel.”

ScottCounseling Response:

Thanks for contacting ScottCounseling.com!

I want to begin by complimenting you for your insights, concerns and your desire to help teach your son humility. Too often parents try to build false hopes or set unrealistic goals for their child to achieve without realizing that the child, sooner or later, will figure out that they can not get close to achieving the unrealistic goal. When this happens, some children turn on the parent(s), get angry and develop low self-esteem.

A couple of things I want to look at:

- 1) Do your child's teachers, coaches and other adults, such as relatives, see the same thing? If so, they can (with a kind heart) share some of your words of wisdom. When children hear, see or have appropriate reinforced moral lessons from numerous adults, they not only begin to understand, but begin to apply what they learn.
- 2) Some children who are behaving the way your son is are insecure. They may brag, share grandiose or exaggerated stories about accomplishments, but in reality, they do not like who they are. They are not only afraid to fail, they are afraid to accept failure.

What to do?

- 1) Is there a father or male figure in your son's life? Some kids, especially boys, need an older male figure to bond with to learn and begin to accept humility. Why a male??? We are wired differently. Your son may just want to show everyone he's a “man;” when in reality, this is not what manhood (or people-hood) is all about. This is not about gender bias or gender roles; it's more about who should be the one (male or female) to tell a girl that her undergarment is showing without embarrassing her...male or female? In this case, who is or who are the right people to reinforce your concerns?
- 2) Is your son really good or pretty good at something that he does? If so, encourage him

to stay involved. If not, have him continue to try different activities (with low pressure!) that he can have a chance to succeed at. Too many sports ARE TOO COMPETITIVE for too many children. I am not only a counselor, but I have work with youth sports as a coach for 36 years. As a former college athlete who received a full ride (scholarship) to play college baseball, I can share with you that too many kids are under too much pressure to succeed in sports to gain fame instead of having fun. For some children, hockey is way too competitive and full of pressure!

3) My Website: ScottCounseling.com has numerous articles on “self-esteem,” “youth sports,” and “child stress.” Check them out today.

Get back to me soon and let me know how things are going. I would give your son’s teacher(s) a call or email first to see if they are seeing the same thing that you are at school. Team with your son’s favorite teacher on this concern of yours.

Again...my compliments to you for caring about teaching your son moral values!